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Understanding Vernacular Architecture in Late Minoan IIIC Crete

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The built environment of Late Minoan IIIC Crete (c. 1200–1050 BCE) offers a striking contrast to the formal and often monumental architecture that characterizes the palaces, villas, and settlements of the preceding Neopalatial period. Relying largely upon locally specific building materials and traditions, LM IIIC architecture expressed the environmental, technological, and cultural norms of each community. This paper investigates the vernacular architecture of the Late Minoan IIIC period, focusing on the settlement of Kavousi Vronda and select other sites in east Crete, to consider the role of materials, construction techniques, topography and visibility in communicating function and status. The settlement at Vronda, for example, consisted of 15–20 houses, a cult building, and what may be a ruler's dwelling. All of the buildings were constructed of local materials, but differences in size of stones used, quality of assembly, scale, and setting clearly indicate the intention of the builders to distinguish special status structures from domestic complexes. In this way, the vernacular architecture reveals deliberate choices made by the inhabitants to express social and ideological relationships.